



Start of [Heinemann Flag Plaque].

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Sys #: 000197150

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DAVID Heineman

These days while auto manufacturers are recalling more and more - I find myself recalling less and less. But, I vividly recall standing here 11 years ago - in this same room - paying tribute to David E. Heineman. That was when we installed the stained-glass window above our main entrance.

Eleven years ago, at the time David Heineman was being honored as the designer of the Detroit flag, 3 courageous astronauts who had traveled to the moon on that same afternoon, planted an American flag.

I remember saying this might mean America had conquered the moon. I wondered if now the United States would have to send the moon some foreign aid.

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Today, David Heineman is again being honored for designing the official flag of Detroit - this time by the erection of this bronze plaque in our museum foyer. The plaque is a gift of love to Detroit's Historical Museum by the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan. It is our way of further recognizing his creative talent for the benefit of our posterity.

David Heineman was a turn-of-the-century civic leader who played a very important part in our city's history, especially during those early years.

His family was among the pioneer settlers in Detroit. His German parents came here in 1851 when Detroit's population was only 21,000, of which 60 were Jews. His father was Emil Heineman and his mother was Fanny Butzel. Both families enjoyed enviable reputations for integrity and philanthropy. No wonder David with such a heritage - was such a splendid man. He was born October 17, 1865 in Detroit. Tomorrow is the anniversary of his birth date.

David Heineman had impressive credentials. He graduated in 1883 from Detroit High School as president of his class. He finished his schooling at the University of Michigan where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. He was a graduate lawyer and practiced in Detroit. You know what a lawyer is - he is someone who is dedicated to Life, Liberty, and the Law Suit of Happiness.

The U of M also gave him an honorary degree. He was a brilliant scholar. He was so smart it was often said of him that he could say "hello" to people in algebra.

Seriously, David Heineman was an amazing man with a multiplicity of personal interests. He had an intense interest in books and libraries. He loved music. The truth is because of his vision he became one of the most active and most vocal of the leading citizens behind the movement to build this great Cultural Center - of which our historical museum is an important part.

He dabbled in art in a small way. His artistic spirit found its outlet in the founding of the Scarab Club of Detroit; and he helped build the Detroit Institute of Art.

He was the one who secured a gift from Andrew Carnegie of \$750,000 to help build the Main Detroit Public Library next door to us. That is a lot of money even in these days.

In addition to his personal legal work and his numerous civic and political undertakings, Mr. Heineman found time to originate the City Manager's plan of government for cities. He was president of State of Michigan Anti-Tuberculosis Society and president of the Board of State Library Commissioners under 3 Governors.

He began his civic career as the Chief Ass't. City Atty. At the same time he revised and codified all of the city's 700 Ordinances...all of which impressed Mayor Hazen Pingree. Heineman became one of "Pings" boys. The mayor urged him to run for elective office. He did and he won. He became a State Legislator; after a couple years in Lansing he decided he'd rather come back to Detroit.

In 1903 he was elected Alderman from the 1st Ward. That made him a member of our Common Council. He served for 7 years and was a Council president.

In 1910 Mayor Breitmeyer appointed him City Controller. At the end of his term he decided he was thru with politics and would follow his other interests including travel abroad. Later, he said he "had paid his 17th visit to Gibraltar."

However, during World War I - Heineman returned to public service when he was appointed Food Administrator for Detroit and Wayne county.

I did not actually know David Heineman, although I had seen him at a couple of civic functions. So I did a great deal of research to try to bring you a fairly accurate word - picture of the man. He was often described as a gifted story-teller. He had a flair for using well chosen words. He was a great debator. He had a fine sense of humor. He was admired by all for his good common sense. He was an aristocrat who could associate with top Detroit Society while at the same time, with just as much enjoyment, consort with our most famous Ward politicians. He was a very democratic man.

These statements were part of those made by the papers in their obituary stories and editorials. One article said - "He seemed out-of-place in the Council because he used 4 syllable words. Sometimes he employed them in reference to his colleagues who were never quite sure whether they were being insulted or complimented."

"Because he was from the 1st Ward - he was always the first to vote when the roll was called. Two thirds of the Council listened to see whether Heineman would say "Aye" or "No" - so they would know how to vote. Not that they loved the highly educated, cultured Heineman - for they feared his tongue - but he was so often right - that it was wise to follow his lead."

"To make his stand clear - he would explain why he voted as he did. This was a great help to those he had momentarily offended because they would then vote the other way."

He enjoyed using big words - like, in later life when someone happened to ask how he was feeling - he is reputed to have said - "My physiology is catching up to my chronology" or "I'm deteriorating on schedule."

The articles went on to say - "The passing of David E. Heineman takes memory back to the days when he was one of Detroit's first citizens - before he was defeated for Lt. Governor of Michigan and then seeking nothing further, retired from politics.

"Heineman was just a dabbler in politics. It was not his profession. He would have liked to succeed in it but he would not pay the price. He would not make small surrenders or cultivate nit-wits...and in those partisan days - one had to do those things. So, he did what he could for Detroit and wished to do many things that were beyond his powers. He was too honest and too outspoken and too independent.

"His caustic tongue spared neither friend nor foe. Because of his refusal to compromise rather than any lack of knowledge or ability he did not become Mayor, Governor or Senator."

David Heineman was a wealthy man with many excellent financial interests including one of the original Detroit street railway companies, an insurance company plus many real estate investments. He was very generous with his contributions to a long list of charities. There was something about his wallet you couldn't help but like.

He was a member of the Mich. Historical Society, a Mason and a Shriner, an Elk, Oddfellow and president of Pisgah Lodge of B'nai B'rith. He also belonged to the University Club, Det. Boat Club and the Old Club of St. Clair Flats. He was president of the local chapter of the American Institute of Archeology.

But the one hobby which he frankly admitted held the highest interest for him was the researching of the early history of the Jewish people of Michigan. He was the first Jew to do this. He successfully uncovered much of what is now known about early Detroit and Michigan Jewish families. He was often described by the American Jewish Historical Society as the official historiographer of the Jews of Michigan.

Always regarded as a confirmed bachelor, he surprised even his closest friends when, at age 53, he married the daughter of a University of Michigan professor. They had no children.

David Heineman died of pneumonia at the age of 70 on February 21, 1935. He is buried in the Beth El Section of Woodmere Cemetery.

The editorials concluded with - "David E. Heineman remains in the memory of many Detroiters as a splendid public servant - a loyal friend - a man of the type much more representative in public life today than when he was a lonely pioneer."

Those were beautiful eulogies and today, we show that we have not forgotten David E. Heineman by our thanks for his uniquely-created official flag of the City of Detroit

Incidentally, my own bookplate incorporates the Detroit flag - because it shows that both my birthday and Detroit's are on the same date - July 24th - except that Detroit is just a little bit older...by a couple of centuries.



End of [Heinemann Flag Plaque].

